

SAFE HAVENS FOR CRIMINALS

QUICK STATS

- ✘ **CONFERENCE:** Regulation (lost trust)
- ✘ **TEAM:** Multiple localities, states, and federal immigration enforcement
- **FUMBLE:** Failing to enforce immigration detainer orders
- **HOW TO RECOVER THE BALL:** Congress should pass legislation to prohibit sanctuary cities

Generally sanctuary cities are localities throughout the U.S. with policies that prohibit or restrict local police or law enforcement cooperation with federal immigration efforts. There are two problems. First, there is no universal definition of the term *sanctuary city*, and it can be used to define many different types of activities. Second, these non-cooperation policies allow criminals to be released back onto the streets, potentially endangering American lives.

On July 1, 2015, Kathryn Steinle was fatally shot in San Francisco by an illegal immigrant who was previously convicted of seven felonies and was previously deported on five occasions. What makes her tragic story worse is that the illegal immigrant should have already been deported for a sixth time. In fact immigration officials had him in custody before transferring him to the San Francisco Sheriff's Department on charges of drug possession. Immigration officials then issued a detainer, which requests notification before a prisoner is released, so they could deport him. But San Francisco, a sanctuary city by its own definition, decided not to notify immigration officials and released the

prisoner after choosing not to charge him for drug possession.

Releasing criminals who could otherwise be deported is a common occurrence. In 2014 approximately 12,000 detainees⁴² were ignored by cities around the nation. Sanctuary city policies that ignore crimes committed by illegal immigrants are unacceptable, and the policies directly lead to consequences like the murder of Kathryn Steinle. Most illegal immigrants are not murderers or criminals, but those who are criminals should not be released into American communities to commit additional crimes.

RECOVERY

Congress should pass legislation to prohibit sanctuary cities and reaffirm that immigration policies are determined at the national level, not by cities and counties. Congress should also set firm consequences for illegal re-entry into the country, particularly for those with criminal convictions. It should not be controversial to remove illegal felons from the United States.

[For more information, please visit:](#)

[CRS Report: Sanctuary Jurisdictions and Criminal Aliens: In Brief](#)

[Los Angeles Times: Sanctuary Cities: How Kathryn Steinle's death intensified the immigration debate](#)